



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ART—THE QUEST OF BEAUTY

(AN ADDRESS BY LOUIS C. TIFFANY)



“Angel of Truth” by Louis C. Tiffany
John G. Shedd Mausoleum, Chicago, Ill.

RESPONDING to J. Alden Weir’s toast, at the exhibition, breakfast and masque, in honour of Mr. Louis C. Tiffany’s birthday in his studios, on a Saturday in February, Mr. Tiffany made the following significant address:

I never could make a speech. I remember when I was a boy, and had a company of zouaves (for it was in the time of the Civil War) we were presented with a banner—and when the time came for me to make the speech of thanks I commenced to tremble and not a word could I utter. The next time I wrote what I proposed to say on my cuff—but having used a lead pencil my

speech was utterly eliminated. Today I have written in ink.

Thank you for this visit to my studio, on my birthday. I am not going to tell you how old I am; I reserve such secrets for my grandchildren—but I can claim to be one of the oldest active academicians—and it was on looking over the year-book of the National Academy of Design that made me think of asking you here today—that I might say a few words about Art, and then to ask you to adjourn to the hall above to see a masque called “The Quest of Beauty.”

What is the Quest of Beauty? What

else is the goal that an artist sets before him, but that same spirit of beauty? Who can give the formula for it? Are there not as many different paths to it, as there are workmen, and are there not as many different definitions of beauty, as there are artists? and yet I wish to express what I have found in art. How can I say in a few words what I have been striving to express in art during my life?

Literature and the Drama express the sensations of tragedy and romance—but not with continuity and lasting effect. Art interprets the beauty of ideas and of visible things, making them concrete and lasting. When the savage searches for the gems from the earth—or the pearls from the sea—to decorate his person—or when he decorates the utensils of war or peace in design and colours—he becomes an artist in embryo, for he has turned his face to the quest of beauty.

Art starts from an instinct in all—stronger in one than another—and that instinct leads to the fixing of beauty in one of a hundred ways. But, if we look closer, we find some artists are drawn aside from the pursuit of beauty to worship the idol of technique, though only a small part of the effectiveness of a work in art can be credited to technique. The thirteenth century stained glassmakers were great because they saw and reproduced beauty from the skies and stars, the gems and rugs; they translated the beauty into the speech of stained glass. In later days, ignoring the beauty of the glass and using paint, they destroyed, by this technique, the beauty for which they were striving.

If I may be forgiven a word about

my own work, I would merely say that I have always striven to fix beauty in wood or stone or glass or pottery, in oil or watercolour, by using whatever seemed fittest for the expression of beauty; that has been my creed, and I see no reason to change it. It seems as if the artists who place all their energies on technique have nothing left over for the more important matter—the pursuit of beauty. The “Modernists”—as they are called for want of a better term—wander after curiosities of technique, vaguely hoping they may light on some invention which will make them famous. They do not belong to art; they are not artists; they are untrained inventors of processes of the arts.

One thing more—it seems to me that the majority of critics miss the chance of doing good by failing to understand the situation; too many of them waste their time in disapproval of what they dislike, instead of looking for what they can honestly admire. The public thinks that a critic is a person who attacks and condemns; a critic should be one who discriminates. The critic who can do good is one who does not neglect the high lights for the shadows, but strives to find the best points in each work of art, and to show his discrimination by setting them clearly before the public.

I wish to end by two quotations from Philip James Bailey:

“Art is man’s nature; nature is God’s art.”

“The worst way to improve the world is to condemn it.”

Thank you friends for your good wishes. I wanted to protest that beauty can be found in any material, through the proper channel.